

LETTERS OF COMPLAINT

Most people will need to complain about unsatisfactory goods or bad service at some point in their lives. If you are writing a letter of complaint, there are some dos and don'ts that can help you get the right outcome.

Do

- Gather all your facts before you start writing the letter, e.g. where and when goods were bought, any customer reference numbers or invoice numbers, or a record of any previous communication with the company concerned.
- Get straight to the point and set out exactly what the problem is.
- Give all the relevant information in a clear and logical sequence.
- State what action you want the company to take and when you expect them to have done this.
- Enclose copies of any relevant documents that support your case.

Don't

- Use abusive language, however frustrated or angry you might feel.
- Allow yourself to get sidetracked from your specific problem into generalized criticism of the company or its products or services.
- Send your letter without checking it carefully for grammar or spelling mistakes.
- Use contractions.

STRUCTURING YOUR LETTER

The opening

- Start your letter with the greeting *Dear Mr* (or *Mrs, Ms, Miss*, etc.) *Surname*.
- If you don't know the name of the person you are writing to, begin with *Dear Sir* or *Dear Madam*; if you don't know their name or sex, use *Dear Sir or Madam*.

The content

- Begin with a heading alerting the reader to the subject of the letter, and in your first sentence draw their attention to the matter you're going to raise or discuss. For example *I am writing to complain...*, or *I wish to express my dissatisfaction with ...* or *Thank you for your letter of ...*
- Introduce your main point as early as possible, stating your reason for writing in a clear, concise way. Once you have done this, you may want to give more details, perhaps adding further background or relevant facts.
- In conclusion, you should state what your expectations are, for example *Please let me know as soon as possible what action you propose to take* or *I look forward to hearing from you within the next ten days*.

The close

The wording at the end of a formal letter follows a standard format:

- If you know the name of the person you're writing to, you should end the letter with *Yours sincerely*.
- If your letter begins with *Dear Sir* or *Dear Madam*, it should end with *Yours faithfully*.
- Your own name should be typed out underneath your signature.